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## **16 big cities have shrunk since '50**

*S.L. population has dropped since 2000 but is starting to rebound*

**By Stephen Ohlemacher** Associated Press and **Deborah Bulkeley** Deseret Morning News

WASHINGTON — Phoenix has overtaken Philadelphia as the nation's fifth largest city, underscoring decades of population losses in America's big industrial centers.

The nation's population has nearly doubled since 1950 — adding about 150 million people. But of the 20 largest cities at mid-century, all but four have shrunk, some by a lot.

Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Buffalo, N.Y., have all lost more than half their population in the past half-century, according to estimates released Wednesday by the Census Bureau.

Utah's largest, Salt Lake City, has also seen a population drop. The city had an estimated population of 178,858 on July 1, 2006, a loss of 2,906 people since 2000. And other core cities in Salt Lake County also saw declines as smaller suburban communities continued to grow.

However, while Salt Lake City lost population from 2002 to 2004, it has been gaining population since then, and that growth is expected to continue, said Alison McFarlane, the city's senior adviser for economic development.

"Some of what we see in the numbers dipping a bit is we're a built city and the housing stock is aging," she said. "Now we're seeing the reverse ... the downtown rising, the City Creek project, (developments) are almost too numerous to name, we have so many projects now coming on line for housing."

In 2005, there were about 6,000 people living in the downtown area, and by 2010 that number is projected to reach 10,000, she said. And the city is beginning the master planning for its last undeveloped area northwest of the airport.

Meanwhile the estimates showed suburban areas continued to grow, as did St. George in Washington County, which since 2000 has moved from the state's tenth to eighth largest city, said Pamela Perlich, senior research economist at the University of Utah.

In Salt Lake County, West Jordan has surpassed Sandy as the state's fourth largest city, with an estimated population of 94,309 on July 1, 2006. Salt Lake remained the largest, followed by West Valley City (119,841) and Provo (113,984).

The growth is expected to continue in bedroom communities in southwest Salt Lake County and northwest Utah County, said state demographer Juliette Tennert. And some of those cities weren't even incorporated a decade ago.

Herriman, for example, grew by 33 percent in one year, she said. "That town wasn't even on the map 10 years ago, and it continues to experience really strong growth."

And McFarlane believes that Salt Lake City will be competitive as young families seek out homes.

"That's where I think the amenities of downtown play a major role, and also jobs. People like to live near their place of employment," she said.

Nationwide, many big cities aren't able to reverse a trend of decline. Philadelphia lost nearly a third of its residents, slipping to about 1.4 million people in 2006. Like many big cities in the Northeast and Midwest, Philadelphia has suffered through a decline in the nation's manufacturing economy. City officials, however, have vowed to rebound.

"Philadelphia is not going to disappear," said Gary Jastrzab, deputy executive director of the city planning commission. "We have a good quality of life here. We have major universities, major health facilities and a very active pharmaceutical industry."

The Census Bureau released 2006 population estimates for U.S. cities Wednesday. The Associated Press compared those estimates with population totals from the 1950 Census.

Phoenix was barely in the top 100 cities in 1950 — it ranked 99th, with about 107,000 people. Last year, it had 1.5 million.

Phoenix added 43,000 people from 2005 to 2006, more than any other city, according to the Census Bureau estimates. It was followed by San Antonio; Fort Worth, Texas; Houston; and North Las Vegas, Nev.

New Orleans, which is still struggling to rebuild following Hurricane Katrina, lost the most people, about 228,000. The Census Bureau estimated the city's population at 223,400 in 2006, a little less than half its size before the storm.

Americans have been migrating south and west for decades in search of better job opportunities and warmer climates. They have also been moving to the suburbs and beyond in search of bigger yards and houses, lower crime rates and better schools.

In 1950, nearly a fifth of the population lived in the nation's 20 largest cities. In 2006, it was about one in 10.

Many older cities are trying to reinvent themselves, relying on the universities, health centers and cultural attractions that have long been desirable, said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank.

"It used to be that the city was the whole regional economy. Now, it is just the center," Frey said. "These cities certainly can be viable with smaller populations."

Mark S. Schweiker, president of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, said regional economic conditions are a better measure of success than conditions in individual cities.

"We remain a significant economic force, and the census doesn't change that," Schweiker said. "The reality is we are situated nicely between the financial capital of the world in New York and the political capital in D.C."

Richard Vedder, an economics professor at Ohio University, sounded a note of optimism for the

future of big cities, albeit a muted one.

"I think they've lost about all the manufacturing they can lose," Vedder said. "There's not a lot left."

*On The Net:*

U.S. Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

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